A

PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS

DIALOGUE

IN THE

SHADES.

BETWEEN

MR. HUME AND DR. DODD.

WITH

NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

TROS TYRIUSQUE MIHI NULLO DISCRIMINE AGETUR.

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MR. Hume and Dr. Dodd are two ſingular and oppoſite characters. Their extenſive abilities, their diſſimilar opinions, morals, and fortunes form a ſtriking contraſt. Though this dialogue contains nothing ſo profound as the reader might perhaps naturally expect, it may furniſh a ſlight antidote againſt the pernicious influence of the opinions of the one, and of the morals of the other. Mr. Hume is a ſplendid and intereſting object to the eye. The memory of Dr. Dodd, it muſt be confeſſed, does not fill the imagination with grateful ideas, but it affords us matter of ſerious reflection.

A

DIALOGUE

IN THE

SHADES.

MR. HUME.

DR DODD! Your moſt humble ſervant.—I am a little ſurprized to ſee you here. When I left the upper regions, I underſtood that you was in perfect health, and active in preaching the goſpel to the ladies. But human life is precarious.

DR. DODD.

Mr. Hume, this rencounter is unexpected. You muſt excuſe my not entering ſo abruptly into the particulars of my unfortunate ſtory: but really, Sir, I am equally ſurprized to meet with you here. I thought you had long ago paſſed the irremeable gulf. But we in the other world are but very imperfectly informed of the deſti-

nation of ſpirits, and the modes of a future ſtate. Pray, Sir, what cauſe has ſo long detained you amid theſe dreary ſcenes?

MR. HUME.

That queſtion I would gladly evade. I amuſed myſelf ſomewhat inconſiderately before my death, with inventing ingenious and ludicrous reaſons, why Charon ought to permit me a longer ſtay in the world. Now, to my no ſmall vexation, I find a ſpirit of a ſevere countenance that is ſtationed here feigns ſeveral ſerious cauſes for retarding my paſſage into the Elyſian abodes.

DR. DODD.

Such as—

MR. HUME.

Pardon me, Doctor, they are of no conſequence to you. You muſt not here buſy yourſelf with a fruitleſs curioſity. Your own affairs will, I preſume, give you trouble enough.

DR. DODD.

Alas! they have given me much trouble and exquiſite anguiſh already. But, Mr. Hume, it is a great conſolation to me to find that you ſtill exiſt as a ſelf-conſcious being, and that there is ſome hope beyond the grave. I always ſhrunk at the idea of the diſſolution or annihilation of the ſoul. But as you have had now ſome experience in the ſpiritual world, and your views of things muſt be enlarged, permit me to aſk your preſent ſentiments of thoſe great principles of religion and philoſophy, concerning which you raiſed ſo many doubts in your life-time.

MR.

MR. HUME.

I perceive theſe ſubjects may be intereſting to you, but before we enter into ſuch ſerious converſation, I muſt inſiſt on knowing that part of your ſtory to which I am a ſtranger.

DR. DODD.

Your requeſt, however reaſonable, touches my breaſt with poignant regret. "The name of Cheſterfield how can I repeat!"

MR. HUME.

I ſuppoſe you mean your old friend and patron Lord Cheſterfield. Had you been here ſometime ago, you might have ſeen that celebrated perſonage in great diſtreſs wandering about in company with three famous French ladies, all of them ſoiled with ſtygian clay. Ah! how changed from him, the gay, the witty, the elegant Cheſterfield! When I beheld that man, who was the ornament of ſocial life, a dejected and melancholy ſpectre, I could not help bewailing the fate of human nature. I hope his lordſhip fares better now. He uſed much addreſs, and urged many refined reaſons for being admitted into the realms of bliſs; but all his wit and political ability availed him nothing with this inexorable ſpirit. At laſt he mentioned ſeveral acts of true benevolence, which ſeemed to reflect much honour upon his heart. Upon this the diſgraced nobleman was received into favour.

DR. DODD.

Ah! Sir, I mean not him—his ſucceſſor—but my crime, my ſhame, my puniſhment—Oh! agonizing thoughts! Forgery—my brain will madden—

MR.

MR. HUME.

In my life-time I had no doubt but that your brain was mad with fanaticiſm; and I always eſteemed the virtue of men of that complexion, to be of a very ambiguous and frail nature. But I feel for a man of your parts, rank and character. It would ſeem that you have experienced no mercy from your country.

DR. DODD.

In the beginning of my misfortunes, the general voice of the people was againſt me. The loud call of impartial juſtice drowned the ſoft whiſpers of pity. The circumſtances of eccleſiaſtical dignity, of learning and character, inſtead of exciting compaſſion, were, to a nation jealous of that great principle of liberty, the original equality of mankind, ſo many arguments againſt my being pardoned *. Afterwards indeed my ſufferings and ſorrows melted the hearts of multitudes, and produced many petitions in my behalf. For ſuch is the peculiar progreſs of the feelings of my countrymen, that the very man whom they in the firſt emotions of reſentment and odium, hurry away to puniſhment, they would gladly reſcue, when they ſee him overwhelmed with miſery and woe. However, their petitions, and my plea of

* "Hang him, exclaimed the peaſant and the tradeſman; were I in his caſe, they "would hang me without any ceremony." But in the extremity of his ſufferings, the general cry was, "pardon him; he has done much good to ſociety; his inten- "tions were not evil; he has made reſtitution; his repentance is ſincere." The gentle feelings and the ingenious ſophiſtry of pity reflect luſtre on our nature, but it is juſtice alone which can ſecure our rights and our laws.

thirty

thirty years ſpent in cultivating humanity and religion were unavailing. The guardians of the laws were inexorable. I ſuffered as a common malefactor. I hope that mankind have reaped ſome benefit and inſtruction from my life. My death, I am ſure, may teach them a ſevere leſſon of wiſdom and virtue.

MR. HUME.

Your * idea, Doctor, of mitigating the rigor of penal laws was worthy of a philoſopical ſage. Some reformation of that kind is ſtill wanted in the poliſhed countries of Europe: but till ſuch a reformation is effected, I am of opinion that the eſtabliſhed laws ought to be impartially executed. The clemency of the ſovereign may perhaps with propriety temper their ſeverity on ſome occaſions; but I am afraid the circumſtances of your caſe were not ſuch as to deſerve the mild interpoſition of royal mercy. Ah! Doctor, I know you have often reproached me for my principles; I could now in my turn reproach you for your conduct, but I ſhould diſhonour the name of a philoſopher were I capable of indulging ſo mean a revenge. Alas! the characters of men are in general ſo chequered with foibles, that we ſeldom have much reaſon to be inſolent and forward in upbraiding any individual. For my own part, in all my various delineations of human character, I have endeavoured to paint impartially the defects and virtues of

* The Doctor has written a ſermon profeſſedly on this ſubject. Whoever would wiſh to ſee it treated at large may conſult "The Eſſay on Crimes and Puniſhments," written by that profound and amiable philoſopher the Marquiſs Beccaria.

every perſon *. This habit has inured me to moderation and candor in judging of men. Nay, I am inclined to think that they are with reſpect to virtue and eſtimation, much nearer an equality than is generally ſuppoſed.

Dr. DODD.

Mr. Hume, though I have tarniſhed the whole contexture of my better days by the laſt part of my life, yet I ſhould be ſorry to lay aſide all diſtinction of character. I conceive that nature originally beſtows on men different degrees of excellence, and that ſuch original ſuperiority of mind may be puſhed much farther by culture and habit. So far I coincide with you as to think that the moſt elevated ſpirits † and the moſt celebrated geniuſes (among

* Mr. Hume has given us many juſt and maſterly paintings of human minds; but he ſeems to have carried this love of impartiality to an extreme. The tints of virtue and vice (if I may ſo ſpeak) are in his pictures ſo inſenſibly blended as to reduce the originals too near an equality. The authors of the Biographia Britannica are accuſed of the ſame fault. Tacitus, Gibbons, &c. have a very different ſtyle and manner. With a deciſive penetration they ſeize the predominant features, and boldly determine the complexion of the character either towards virtue or vice.

† Mr. Melmoth in his elegant tranſlation of Cicero's Letters has the following note: "To turn from the actions of Cicero to his writings, is changing our point of "view, it muſt be acknowledged, extremely to his advantage. It is on this ſide in- "deed, that his character can never be too warmly admired: and admired it will un- "doubtedly be, ſo long as manly eloquence and genuine philoſophy have any friends. "Perhaps there is ſomething in that natural mechaniſm of the human frame neceſſary "to conſtitute a fine genius, which is not altogather favourable to the excellencies of the "heart. It is certain at leaſt (and let it abate our envy of uncommon parts) that a "great ſuperiority of intellectual qualifications has not often been found in conjunc- "tion with the much nobler advantages of a moral kind." Vol. i, p. 201. Before we acquieſce in this melancholy concluſion, it were to be wiſhed that ſome one would attempt a ſolution of the queſtion by a deeper enquiry into the conſtitution of the hu-

whom

whom I cannot claſs myſelf) have weakneſſes and foibles, which ſufficiently depreſs human pride and vanity.

Mr. HUME.

I know that it is as impoſſible to meet with two minds, as it is with two faces exactly ſimilar. I grant you likewiſe that ſome men are born with happier diſpoſitions and more ſplendid talents than others. Neither can it be denied that education, and the occurrences of life have powerful effects on the mind. Yet when we come to determine from the combined influence of all theſe circumſtances the comparative merit of characters, how often do we find them upon the whole reduced nearly to the ſame level! There have been indeed ſome diſtinguiſhed favourites of heaven, ſuch as Socrates, Marcus Antoninus, &c. who ſeem to have been uniformly inſpired and governed by a moral ſpirit.

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man frame, and a more accurate ſurvey of the hiſtory of men of genius. It is preſumed (and the preſumption is pleaſing) that ſuch an enquiry might lead us to the contrary concluſion. Genius has no doubt been often found united with great vices, but oftener, I think, with great virtues.

Perhaps the ſplendor of high abilities gives a more ſtriking and blacker appearance to the foibles of their poſſeſſor, as the motes in a room otherwiſe inviſible are rendered conſpicuous by the beams of the ſun. Had the elegant tranſlator collected all the favourable and unfavourable circumſtances relative to Cicero's character into one point of view, his judgement of that great man would perhaps have been leſs ſevere. Mr. Melmoth adopts a more liberal ſentiment in another place, when giving his ſanction to an obſervation of Monſieur Dacier concerning the fair ſex, he thus expreſſes himſelf: "May I add my ſuffrage to that of this celebrated critic, by declaring "from the ſame domeſtic experience, that uncommon knowledge and a ſuperior under-"ſtanding are perfectly conſiſtent with thoſe more valuable qualities of the heart, "which conſtitute the principal grace and ornament of the female character?" Vol. i, p. 319.

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There may be alſo ſome anomalous monſters in nature diſtinguiſhed for their immorality. But the ordinary run of mankind have a more mixed character and approach nearer to each other.

DR. DODD.

Whatever deference I have for your ſuperior underſtanding, I cannot in this caſe ſubmit to your philoſophical deciſion. The ſcripture hath taught me, that between the extremes of virtue and vice there is a long gradation of characters. Beſides, you ſeem to have attributed all to original conſtitution, education and fortune, and to have overlooked what part every man has in the improvement or corruption of his own mind. I once leaned to a religious opinion which aſcribed as little to human liberty as thoſe philoſophers who maintain the blind power of fate and neceſſity.

MR. HUME.

There is ſome hope that after we have paſſed the gulf theſe difficulties which appeared ſo inexplicable to us in the other world may be cleared up. At preſent I am involved in a ſtate of greater perplexity than ever. I am embarraſſed by a commixture of old and new ideas. The enlargement of my views has diſturbed my former ſyſtem of opinions. But after all were a perſon of ordinary underſtanding to reflect on the contraſt between my character, principles, fortune, &c. and yours, I think you muſt allow that he would be at a loſs to determine which he would prefer.

DR.

DR. DODD.

It is to me at preſent an ungrateful reflection, that my example may raiſe ſuch doubts and prejudices among mortals. My conduct has diſhonoured my principles, and your manners have affixed a ſpecious ſplendor to yours. But conſider, Sir, that the blameable parts of my life were in direct contradiction to my principles. Conſider likewiſe, that by a happy ſingularity your practice was inconſiſtent with the opinions you profeſſed. I conceive then that the ſource of my errors ought not to be ſought for in my religious tenets, and that your virtues ought not to be aſcribed to your philoſophical ſyſtem. To account for theſe appearances we muſt have recourſe to other cauſes. But ſtill I repeat it with ſorrow that the vicious ſpots of my life, and my ignominious exit *, have obſcured all my virtues, and in ſome meaſure fruſtrated my labours for the good of mankind. When the current of popular odium runs violently againſt a character, the bulk of mankind cannot judge with any degree of moderation or candor. They cannot conceive him to be virtuous or vicious by halves; they even refuſe him any merit from the antecedent virtues of his life, not reflecting how eaſy it is in the preſent corrupt ſtate of human nature for a man once virtuous † to degenerate into vice.

* The fame of a great man ſuffers only a momentary eclipſe from diſgrace and an ignominious death. It afterwards breaks forth with redoubled luſtre. Crimes alone can leave an indelible ſtain on reputation.

† That elegant philoſopher Xenophon, accounting for the corruption and degeneracy of Critias and Alcibiades after they had forſaken the ſociety and converſation

But upon ſerious reflection how little do a few unhappy exceptions like me weigh againſt the principles of chriſtianity when compared with the many ſublime characters formed upon that elevated and pure ſyſtem?

MR. HUME.

I have lately been conſidering whether the character of a chriſtian and philoſopher might not be happily united. I confeſs that I once thought the elements of chriſtianity and philoſophy ſuch diſcordant materials as to refuſe any cemented union. I wiſh however that like Locke, Bacon, Grotius, Boyle, and ſome other great men I had attempted to reconcile theſe apparent differences. It is poſſible after all that there may be no natural inconſiſtence between faith and reaſon. Better then had it been for you, Doctor, that you had mingled a little more of rational philoſophy with your theology; better for me that my inquiries had ſavoured a little more of religion.

DR. DODD.

Probably your cool temperament inclined you to ſcepticiſm. I muſt confeſs that an extravagant fancy and irregular paſſions hurried me into the other extreme of enthuſiaſm, which biaſs or in-

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of Socrates, enlarges on the truth of this opinion *. It is a truth which ought to be ever preſent to our minds, and to teach us to keep a vigilant eye over the paſſions. There can be no greater proof of the corruption of human nature than that the deſcent to vice is rapid and eaſy, but the re-aſcent to virtue ſlow and laborious.

* Xenoph. Memor. Lib. 1. C. 2.

clination

clination was not a litle cheriſhed by popular applauſe. My mind was naturally ſuſceptible of the warmeſt impreſſions of religion, but it ſacrificed them with equal eaſe to the ſolicitations of ardent paſſion. However good and benevolent my intentions might be, yet this unſteady and changeful complexion has given me the appearance of a theatrical performer in religion and virtue, rather than of a real, uniform and conſiſtent chriſtian. Thus the natural texture of my conſtitution diſpoſed me to an irregular enthuſiaſm rather than to philoſophic ſpeculation and ſaturnine habits. Yet I do not maintain that there is any neceſſary oppoſition between faith and reaſon, between religion and ſound philoſophy *. On the contrary they may happily co-operate in a comprehenſive and elevated mind. The eminent inſtances you have mentioned, are ſufficient to convince us how much the mixed character of a chriſtian and philoſopher engages our admiration; they have ſhewn us that religion prohibits no inveſtigations uſeful to mankind, or adequate to the human capacity. Yet it becomes not philoſophy to encroach too far on the province of theology, or to pretend to inveſtigate its inſcrutable myſteries. We learn from eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, what corruption was introduced into theology by an improper coalition of chriſtianity with the heterogeneous and

* Let us hear with what propriety that honeſt and amiable enthuſiaſt Petrarch expreſſes himſelf on this ſubject. "I love truth, ſays he, and not ſects. I am ſometimes "a Peripatetic, a Stoic or an Academician, and often none of them; but—always a "Chriſtian. To philoſophize, is to love wiſdom; and the true wiſdom, is Jeſus Chriſt. "Let us read the hiſtorians, the poets and the philoſophers; but let us have in our hearts "the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt: in which alone is perfect wiſdom and perfect happineſs." Life of Petrarch, Book i, p. 27.

myſtic ideas of Platoniſm. Perhaps alſo the ſubtle ſchool of Ariſtotle has upon the whole proved unfavourable to the ſame divine cauſe *.

MR. HUME.

The complexion of my writings might convice you that I was not of ſo cold a temperament as you ſuppoſe. But to wave that queſtion, may it not be preſumed that the moral conduct of a philoſopher is actuated and governed by ſentiments and ideas very different from thoſe of chriſtianity? it may even be doubted whether his principles are not of a more ſublime caſt. That humiliating idea of human nature which Monſieur Paſchal has carried to ſuch an extravagant length, that deſpondent diffidence of its powers, and conſtant recourſe to ſuperior beings, may depreſs the generous ſentiments of the mind. Hence an abject ſuperſtition ſeems ſo frequently to have been productive of puſillanimity, and to have checked the more elevated efforts of virtue in modern times.

DR. DODD.

I cannot think, Mr. Hume, that there is any contrariety between the practical principles of religion and thoſe of true Philoſophy. Moral maxims ſeem to be immutable and eternal; hence the morality of the greateſt philoſophers of antiquity coincides as far as it goes with that of chriſtianity. The only difference is that the moral precepts of antiquity are carried to a ſtill higher degree

* Lord Bacon the greateſt philoſophical genius of modern times is remarkably cautious and even timid in referring the truths of religion to the diſcuſſion of reaſon. Inſtaurat. Magna, Lib. ix.

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of purity by the goſpel, a circumſtance ſurely in its favour.—The repreſentation which the ſcripture gives of human nature is agreable to the uniform tenor of experience and hiſtory. It deſcribes it with that mixture of virtue and vice, of greatneſs and weakneſs, which appear ſo conſpicuous in every page of hiſtory, in every country, in every age, and every individual. Further, by unfolding the original cauſes of the perfection and degeneracy of the mind, and the manner of reſtoring it to virtue and happineſs, the ſcripture accounts for thoſe phænomena of the moral world, which to the antients appeared totally inexplicable. This moderate and juſt account of man ſteers between the extremes of a vain oſtentation and abject puſillanimity, and is perfectly conſonant to the facts which we know relative to human nature. To charge the general ſpirit of the religion with the weakneſſes of individuals, and the corruptions of ſuperſtition, would be extremely unfair. To obſerve ſome of the greateſt men that ever Rome produced anxiouſly conſulting the will of the Gods by the chirping of birds and the entrails of beaſts furniſhes as proper matter for ridicule and ſevere reflection as the moſt ſuperſtitious appearances of degenerate chriſtianity. Yet theſe rites of the Romans were, if I miſtake not, the corrupt language of a noble ſpirit of religion. But ſay you, "an abject puſillanimity has prevented the more elevated efforts of "virtue in modern times." The truth of the matter ſeems to be that the impreſſions which the claſſics make upon our minds in the agreable period of youth prepoſſeſs us with an enthuſiaſtic admiration of the celebrated characters of antiquity. In that uncorrupted but unreflecting ſeaſon the mind indulges at large in

the contemplation of the virtues of favourite perſonages, but does not examine their foibles with that jealous and cautious judgment, which we uſe when we come to ſtudy modern hiſtory. The diſtance of the times in which thoſe heroical Beings lived throws an additional grandeur over their memory. But upon an impartial ſurvey of hiſtory, we ſhall find the characters formed upon the principles of chriſtianity no ways inferior to the moſt illuſtrious perſons which adorn the annals of human nature. We ſhall find ſuch examples of magnanimity, heroiſm, patriotiſm and humanity as can hardly be parallelled by the moſt famous paſſages of antient ſtory. We are apt to think that man has reaped his higheſt honours in Greece and Rome; we ſeem frequently to ſuppoſe that we ourſelves are the deſcendants of a barbarous, puſillanimous or degenerate race; but nothing can be more contrary to fact. The whole hiſtory of modern Europe confutes this falſe hypotheſis. The Britiſh and the French heroes are no ways inferior to the Roman and the Grecian.

That conſtant reliance on heaven which the goſpel inculcates cannot have any tendency to depreſs the mind: it is a principle of all others the beſt calculated to inſpire it with magnanimity and fortitude. In fact we find that the moſt admired characters of antiquity were ſupported by this very principle. I know very well that men of the world conſider theſe religious appearances of great men as mere political ſtratagems or pious frauds to overawe or perſuade the credulous multitude. In ſome caſes they may naturally admit of this conſtruction, but in general ſuch an account of them is quite improbable. Of all the ſects of antiquity that of the

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ſtoics is ſuppoſed to have aſcribed moſt to the internal ſtrength and fortitude of human nature. They are commonly ſuppoſed to have held this grand principle of conſtant dependance on heaven in contempt. I recollect however a very ſingular paſſage relating to this very ſubject in that celebrated letter of Marcus Antoninus, which he wrote in anſwer to the applications of ſome heathens for leave to perſecute the chriſtians on account of prodigies and earthquakes with which the country had been terrified. "As to thoſe earth-"quakes, for ſometime paſt, which yet continue, it is proper to "admoniſh you, to compare your conduct with theirs. They, on "ſuch occaſions, confide more in their God; but you all this time, "through your ignorance, neglect the Gods as well as other things, "and all the worſhip due to that immortal Being, whoſe worſhip-"pers the chriſtians you are harraſſing and perſecuting to death." From this paſſage we ſee what opinion that great ſtoic philoſopher had of the principle now in queſtion. The ſtoic ſchool was the principal nurſery of great men of every kind, and it is remarkable that there is a great ſimilarity between its tenets and thoſe of chriſtianity. For my own part I could never diſcover any thing like an abject tendency in the ſpirit of the goſpel. There is no oppoſition ſurely between that humility which it recommends and magnanimity. Humility is itſelf the higheſt proof of greatneſs of mind. All that elevation which is founded on pride is of a baſtard kind, and inconſiſtent with the more refined ſentiments of philoſophy as well as religion.

MR. HUME.

There is another plauſible objection againſt the influence of chriſtianity on the heart. It may be alledged that the idea of forgiveneſs through repentance and the interceſſion of another Being muſt by conſtantly operating on the mind render it leſs cautious in treſpaſſing the boundaries of morality. The confeſſion and abſolution practiſed in the church of Rome is, you know, a very eaſy and agreeable inſtitution for the conſciences of mankind.

DR. DODD.

Thoſe grand ideas, Mr. Hume, of repentance, mediation and forgiveneſs, though unfolded in their pure and genuine colours by chriſtianity, are not, I preſume, peculiar to that ſyſtem alone. Though involved in miſts and obſcurity, they ſeem to have formed a part of the eſſence of every ſpecies of religion of which we have any credible accounts. Hence one would be tempted to conclude, that ſuch extraordinary principles are interwoven with the frame of human nature, or have been tranſmitted down and diſſeminated through mankind in conſequence of ſome early celeſtial revelation. In what age or country do we not find the ſenſe of guilt, the contrite ſupplication, the ſacred ode, the altar and the ſacrifice? How ſhould theſe ſingular principles ſo univerſally prevail, if there was not an invariable conſiſtence between them and the conſtitution and ſituation of man?—If we ſhould attempt to baniſh repentance, interceſſion, forgiveneſs, and mercy from the moral ſyſtem, we muſt change the frame of human nature.

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Theſe myſterious methods of religion, however inexplicable to our limited faculties, muſt appear to every man who reaſons from facts, neceſſary in the ſyſtem of nature. Our condition without them is hopeleſs. Men of the moſt irreproachable virtue are obliged to confeſs with ſorrow the imperfection of their conduct, and the neceſſity of repentance and a Saviour.——But you object that the hope of forgiveneſs encourages men to proceed in vice: and it muſt be confeſſed that nothing is more common. But ſuch deluſive preſumption is not only unwarranted by chriſtianity, but involves an abſolute contradiction to its principles. The firſt idea of chriſtianity is to ſtop the farther progreſs of the mind in vice. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The goſpel requires the heart not only to be filled with contrition for paſt errors, but to adhere firmly to the ſide of virtue for the future. To be thus uniformly influenced by a pious ſorrow for former miſconduct, and by the moſt ſincere and ſteady reſolutions of reformation, are eſſential preliminaries in the chriſtian covenant.—

MR. HUME.

But, Doctor, if no period in life can be aſſigned at which if a man reforms his manners and embraces the offers of the goſpel, he may not hope for future happineſs, the mind may naturally reaſon thus with itſelf; "why may I not yet purſue my favourite vices and "pleaſures, as I may afterwards, by contrition, reformation, and "the mediation of an all-powerful Saviour, obliterate my faults and "obtain eternal felicity?—"

Dr. D O D D.

Notwithſtanding the corruption of our nature, it ſtill retains ſome portion of its original honour. Hence it is obſervable that a perſon in whoſe boſom there is the leaſt tincture of generoſity, is not naturally apt to perſiſt in inſulting the clemency of a noble and forgiving benefactor from the hopes of impunity. Forgiveneſs forms a ſtrong chain of gratitude and obedience. At any rate a perſon, who ſtill proceeds in the courſe of immorality from the hope of forgiveneſs in conſequence of future repentance, acts upon principles directly oppoſite to thoſe of chriſtianity *. And here I ought not to forget remarking that every ſtep a man advances in the career of corruption and vice increaſes the difficulty, and leſſens the probability of his attaining to that happineſs which the goſpel offers, ſo that at laſt the difficulty may become almoſt inſuperable and the probability almoſt as nothing. We have ſome ground both from reaſon and ſcripture to infer that the ſoul may by continued habits of depravity become as incurable (according to the ordinary courſe of things) as the body does by a long and rooted mortification.

Mr. H U M E.

Some have objected to chriſtianity "that the notion of future "rewards and puniſhments is mercenary and detracts from the ge-

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* "Shall we continue in ſin that grace may abound? God forbid: how ſhall we "that are dead to ſin live any longer therein?" Romans, ch. i, ver. 1, 2.

"nerous

" nerous nature of true virtue. But poſſibly this objection may " appear ſomewhat too refined."

DR. DODD.

Of all the arguments employed by men of your ſect that which you have now mentioned ſeems to me the moſt ſtrained and affected. I remember that even the moral, but enthuſiaſtic Lord Shaftſbury throws a ſlur upon that fundamental principle of future rewards and puniſhments. But no one determines againſt it in ſuch bold and triumphant terms as the celebrated Royal philoſopher of Sans Souci * towards the concluſion of that famous ſpecimen of infidelity his letter to Mareſchal Keith. Yet ſtill I cannot help treating the objection as frivolous. Every percipient Being muſt be determined by ſome motives of pleaſure and pain, of happineſs or miſery. To ſuppoſe man not to be influenced by any ſuch motives is to ſuppoſe him unpercipient and inſenſible. If a philoſopher avers that he is determined by the abſolute rectitude of a certain line of behaviour, that very idea of rectitude is a motive of happineſs to him. The motives of happineſs which chriſtianity propoſes are of the moſt pure and generous kind, nor can it be

* Allez, lâches chrêtiens, que les feux éternels
Empêchent d'aſſouvir vos deſirs criminels,
Vos auſteres vertus n'en ont que l'apparence.
Mais nous qui renonçons à toute recompenſe;
Nous qui ne croyons point vos éternels tourmens,
L'intérêt n'a jamais ſouillé nos ſentimens,
Le bien du genre humain, la vertu nous anime,
L'amour ſeul du devoir nous a fait fuir le crime.

deemed

deemed any diſadvantage to them that they extend beyond the limits of time into the inviſible world.

MR. HUME.

The defence you have made for the practical principles of chriſtianity has, I own, a plauſible air; but if they have neceſſarily ſo powerful and ſo ſalutary an influence on the heart as the gentlemen of your order maintain, I cannot help expreſſing my ſurprize that a man daily converſant with them like you ſhould have ſo egregiouſly deviated from the line of moral rectitude. A great part of your life was devoted to ſenſual pleaſure, and your laſt action was a crime of a deep and malignant hue.

DR. DODD.

My original conſtitution diſpoſed me to pleaſure, and the fatal conſequences of pleaſure drove me to the laſt diſgraceful meaſure of my life. But let me once more repeat to you that as far as I adhered to the principles of chriſtianity, ſo far I found myſelf happy and fortunate, and in proportion as I deviated from them I found myſelf miſerable. It is to the influence of theſe good principles that I attribute all the virtuous and honourable parts of my conduct. Did they not operate frequently on my mind, I might have exceeded Villiars and Rocheſter in profligacy. — A licentious paſſion for the other ſex predominated in my frame, and I muſt in a great meaſure attribute to it that ruinous diſſipation of life, which has diſgraced my reputation. The paſſion of love, if not carefully regulated by religion and reaſon, proves the moſt artful and

dangerous

dangerous ſnare to human virtue. It inſinuates itſelf under the alluring appearance of gentleneſs and tenderneſs, and ſo wins inſenſibly upon a ſoft and ſympathetic temper. But if it is improperly indulged, it inevitably introduces indolence, unmanly effeminacy, and not unfrequently a total depravation of ſentiment into the ſoul. The manners of Europe are verging apace to a total contempt of chaſtity. I muſt confeſs with ſorrow of heart that the influence of the example of the gay, and the maxims of the world, prevailed too often over thoſe ſentiments of purity which I had imbibed in the ſchool of chriſtianity.—I well know that your notions of this virtue are far from being ſtrict; indeed there is no ſubject which is treated with more ridicule among the faſhionable part of mankind. The poiſon is ſtill more pernicious as this libertine diſpoſition is frequently found united with an inſinuating ſweetneſs of manners and a ſpecious humanity. Yet I remember that great moraliſt the Emperor Marcus Antoninus does not heſitate to adopt upon this ſubject the opinion of Theophraſtus, however contrary it may be to the poliſhed and luxurious ideas of modern Europe *, "that in comparing crimes thoſe are greater "which men are incited to by luſt or deſire of pleaſure, than thoſe "which flow from anger."

Ambition, the love of pleaſure, of ſhow and popular applauſe, with their ordinary concomitant extravagance, I conſider as the cauſes of my ruin. For ſuch unreal ſhadows have I ſacrificed

* Mar. Ant. Medit. Book ii, ſect. 10.

the ſolid pleaſures of religion. The genteel was the predominant idea in my mind, and to it I have fallen a victim like many other thouſands who perpetually aſpire to reach that unfixed imaginary ſtandard. Tho' the love of fame when conſidered as a ſubordinate paſſion is laudable, yet to employ the ſacred eloquence of the goſpel merely as an inſtrument to acquire vulgar eclat, as I have often done, is a ſpecies of proſtitution on which I can never reflect but with pain.—

Oh! that I had cultivated ſevere virtue with the ſame ardor with which I worſhipped at the ſhrines of pleaſure, ambition, and popularity! But, Mr. Hume, I cannot help in my turn expreſſing my ſurpriſe that a man of your ſound judgment in other matters ſhould adopt ſuch abſurd opinions on the ſubject of religion; and it is ſtill more extraordinary how a man of ſuch principles ſhould retain ſo fair a moral character through life. One would think that you acted as much againſt your own conviction as I did.

MR. HUME.

I had all the prejudices of education in favour of religion and virtue as much as you had. To deſcribe the progreſs of my ſentiments and account for the change of my opinions at large would require more leiſure than I now have. At my entrance into life I found myſelf encompaſſed with difficulties, and my breaſt inflamed with the moſt ardent paſſion for fame. I judged that if I proceeded in the common and beaten tract of opinions, I ſhould find it extremely difficult to attract the attention of mankind. I thought it therefore neceſſary to uſher in the dawn of my fame by ſome ſingular appearance.

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The operation of this notion on my mind, and my commerce with men and books of free principles, gradually gave a different turn to my opinions. Ideas which at firſt occurred to me as mere paradoxes or experiments of ingenuity, being long dwelt upon gave me inſenſibly a habit of ſcepticiſm and ſuſpence, and ſeemed to aſſume the appearance of ſerious truths. Mankind in general are apt to flatter themſelves that their opinions and principles are the reſult of mature reaſoning, and do not conſider what a ſhare the prejudices of fancy have in the formation of them. I cannot however help thinking that if the moſt ſingular and obſtinate opinions of men were to be traced back to their origin, but that we ſhould find that they owed their riſe to extraordinary incidents in their lives and the prejudices of the imagination, rather than to any cool and deliberate inquiry. When an acute metaphyſical genius and an inflexible temper come to the aid of notions thus originally conceived, the ſpell becomes almoſt indiſſoluble. Many were the prejudices which biaſſed my mind on this ſubject of religion.

DR. DODD.

You will much oblige me by enumerating them. Your ſtudied reaſonings and arguments I am not at all unacquainted with, but your primary prejudices which inclined you to ſuch opinions I can only gueſs.

MR. HUME.

I. In the firſt place, the example of the venerable philoſophers of antiquity was full before my eyes. I could not help entertaining the higheſt admiration for thoſe enlarged minds who ſoared above

their

their cotemporaries, broke the fetters of ſuperſtition and aſſerted the rights of reaſon. To imitate theſe great men, you muſt allow, was no object of vulgar ambition.

II. The various and fantaſtic appearances of religion in the different ages and countries of the world filled my mind with diſguſt and perplexity. Amid ſuch a chaos where was I to find any ſteady and fixed principles? what criterion could I adopt but my reaſon? I always allowed that there were circumſtances in favour of chriſtianity which ſeemed to entitle it to the firſt rank among the religions of the earth. But afterwards when I reflected upon that miſerable diſtraction of ſentiments, and the endleſs variety of hoſtile ſects among chriſtians; when I recollected how many rational, abſurd, and pernicious tenets had been alternately maintained, refuted and revived, I was once more loſt in doubt and returned to the principles of ſcepticiſm. I could not review the hiſtory of my native religion but with ſome degree of contempt. Thoſe ſcenes of enthuſiaſm and rage which it preſents could not but hurt a calm and philoſophic eye. Though I had imbibed early prejudices in its favour, yet I found by experience that in this naked ſyſtem, where they were not rivetted by the habitual enchantment of rites and ceremonies, theſe favourable prepoſſeſſions were eaſily obliterated.

III. The ſeeming contradiction between prophecies and miracles and the ordinary apparent courſe of nature in a great meaſure determined me againſt the belief of divine revelation. I confeſs that Dr. Campbell the moſt liberal and ingenious of all

all my adverſaries has oppoſed me on this ground with much ability and ſucceſs. However I thought it very improbable that the Deity ſhould violate thoſe laws of nature which he had conſtituted; and I was ſurprized to find that they who believed and defended the prophecies and miracles on which the proof of chriſtianity hangs, denied facts of a ſimilar kind among other nations, though they ſeemed to wear marks of almoſt equal authenticity.—After all I am inclined to think that ſuch extraordinary phænomena muſt be conſidered not as violations of the laws of nature, but as involved in its geueral ſyſtem, nor can I ſee upon what principles we can entirely reject all the divine revelations and interpoſitions recorded among the heathens, if we implicitly adopt thoſe that relate to the Moſaic and Chriſtian ſyſtems.

Of a kin to this prejudice was the following: Praiſe and thankſgiving always appeared to me proper and eſſential parts of religious worſhip, but I had great doubts with reſpect to the efficacy of prayer. I eſteemed it no ſmall preſumption in mortals to think of intereſting the Divinity in their little affairs, or of altering the courſe of his government by their ſupplications. It did not then occur to me that the Supreme Being might accompliſh the ends of the moral, as he does thoſe of the natural world, by the inſtrumentality of ſecondary cauſes and means.

IV. I could not review the religious wars and animoſities of Europe but with a mixture of horror and pity. When I reflected what fatal effect theſe ſacred quarrels entailed on mankind, I could not help admiring the tolerating ſpirit of antient Polytheiſm. Chriſtianity, it is true, profeſſes itſelf to be the religion of charity

and peace, but what a fierce and implacable temper many of its propagators † have ſhewn, I need not tell you.

V. My unfavourable impreſſions of religion were not a little ſtrengthened by the averſion which I had conceived againſt the eccleſiaſtic order in general. Their ambition, their narrow caſt of ſentiment, and their unfeeling ſeverity of diſpoſition gave me a ſtrong diſlike to their character. The oppoſition which I met with from that quarter confirmed me in this opinion. Their ſeverity might be naturally derived from their ſtrict attention * to the intereſts of virtue; but I was not diſpoſed to adopt favourable conſtructions.

It is wonderful what effect all theſe combined prejudices had on my mind, and how they engaged my reaſon on their ſide. Such was the progreſs of my ſentiments that at length it appeared to me no inglorious enterprize to overturn the motley ſyſtems of ſuperſtition, as I deemed them, which prevailed over Europe, and to eſtabliſh upon their ruins the rational principles of pure theiſm. The ſubtlety of my genius ſupplied me with a ſufficient ſtore of

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* To argue againſt a thing from the corruption of it is a common error in reaſoning. Monſieur Bayle falls into it, when he talks of the evils which have reſulted to ſociety from religion. Mr. Hume, though he ſeems here to confeſs that his deteſtation of religious wars and controverſies prejudiced him againſt chriſtianity itſelf, highly condemns in one paſſage of his writings the falſe mode of reaſoning now in queſtion. Hume's Hiſt. chap. 71.

The prejudices and averſions of many however are of ſo infectious and diffuſive a nature as to extend to every thing that has any relation to their object in ſpite of their reaſon.

* The vulgar prejudice againſt the clergy is preciſely of the ſame nature with that of Monſieur Bayle's againſt religion in general.

ingenious

ingenious arguments; and the reception which my writings met with from the faſhionable part of mankind encouraged me to proceed. This, Doctor, is a ſketch of the hiſtory * of my ſpeculations: I never advanced however, as ſome have imagined, ſo far as to deny the exiſtence of a Deity, or the unalterable diſtinction between vice and virtue. Some of the gentler foibles of human nature, I muſt confeſs, I have treated with too much lenity. I have been too indulgent to the gallantry of the age.

DR. DODD.

This account of your opinions I conceive, but your moral character remains ſtill an inexplicable paradox. You ſeemed ſome time ago to confeſs that your temperament was not cold nor inſenſible to the ſolicitations of pleaſure, &c.

Indeed I am inclined to think that an imagination ſo lively and vigorous as you poſſeſſed is ſeldom, if ever found † unconnected with warm paſſions. Yet it appears that you all along treated with contempt that grand principle of philoſophy and religion, which

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* If there be any probability in this theory of the origin and progreſs of Mr. Hume's opinions, it ought to teach the young and the ingenious how inſenſibly the mind may contract a dark and ſceptical colouring.

† Whither an ardent fancy and moderate paſſions may not ſubſiſt in the ſame conſtitution is a queſtion attended with ſome difficulty. A chaſte and amiable imagination, like that of Mr. Addiſon, may be found united with cool and temperate paſſions, and this auſpicious union promiſes the faireſt view of happineſs to the individual. An ardent and bold imagination on the contrary will, I preſume, naturally tinge the paſſions, and if not tempered by an uncommon ſolidity of underſtanding, hurry away its poſſeſſor into extravagant opinions and actions.

is the moſt powerful ſanction of the laws of virtue, " the immor-
" tality of the ſoul".

MR. HUME.

In conſequence of a virtuous education and early habits, the maxims * of virtue had taken deep root in my heart. The utmoſt libertiniſm of opinion was not able to eradicate them. The ardor of my imagination and paſſions was tempered by the ſolidity of my judgement: and though I treated the immortality of the ſoul with diſreſpect, yet there are other ſanctions of virtue which did not eſcape my attention. To a man, who does not with puerile weakneſs conſign himſelf to every tranſient pleaſure or bound proſpects by preſent appearances, but extends his views to the remote conſequences of things, it will appear a principle of great certainty and importance " that even in the courſe of human life, virtue and " pleaſure, vice and miſery are found as inſeparably connected as " cauſe and effect in the phyſical ſyſtem." The love of reputation, the ordinary ideas, maxims and laws of ſociety are powerful ſanctions of the rules of virtue. To acquire fame and the admiration of mankind was the principal object of my ambition, and experience and hiſtory had taught me that theſe were not to be attained

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* " Since Mr. Hume aſcribes ſo much to education and early habits, we cannot " help reflecting how much he owed his virtues to chriſtianity, though he ſeems not " to have been aware of it." Indeed it were much to be wiſhed, that deiſts would be more candid in acknowledging their obligations to revelation. It is remarkable that Lord Herbert of Cherbury who may be conſidered as the father of modern deiſm has gleaned and ſelected the beſt principles of his ſyſtem from the ſcripture.

without

without the appearances of virtue. Beſides I reckoned it extremely inconſiſtent with that philoſophic character to which I aſpired to be enſlaved by my appetites, Temperance is eſſential to the character of a ſage.—In the laſt place, I cultivated the principles of humanity and benevolence with peculiar attention. Happily the ſocial diſpoſition was ſtrongly implanted by nature in my heart, and I have continually diſtinguiſhed it with care from the principle of ſelfiſhneſs. Many ingenious and honeſt men have in their theories endeavoured to reſolve both into the ſame origin, but ſuch a corruption of ideas and miſapplication of words has certainly a tendency to deprave and contract the more generous ſentiments of the mind. I have at all times conſidered ſelf-love * and the love of mankind as eſſentially diſtinct, and have uniformly revered the ſocial principle.

DR. DODD.

Mr. Hume, you have certainly been guilty of one great violation of the ſocial principle in attempting to demoliſh the eſtabliſhed religion of your country. Hiſtory brings us information from every quarter that the decline of religion is invariably attended with the corruption of morals, the ruin of national felicity, and the downfall of the ſtate. When that ſyſtem of uſeful truths or prejudices

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* To the honour of Mr. Hume be it ſaid that this diſtinction was no leſs apparent in his practice than his theory. It ſeems to have been peculiarly reſerved for our age to conſider the more generous ſentiments of human nature as the effects of madneſs, and to ſubſtitute a principle of deliberate ſelfiſhneſs in the room of that ſublime virtue denominated by the antients PRUDENCE.

as you may term them, which regulated the wayward ideas of mortals, is disarranged or dissolved, their unreined minds run wild and involve the society in every species of folly, vice and misery.

MR. HUME.

That charge has continually resounded in my ears for many years. My free and paradoxical thoughts were not intended for the ordinary tribe of mankind, but for men of ingenuity and reflection, who are capable of judging for themselves. I well knew that the vulgar were not to be regulated by the principles of pure theism or philosophy. I did not mean to abolish those pious arts and ideas, which are found so useful and salutary in managing that class of men, I was only desirous to reduce them nearer the standard of probability, reason and truth. Yet the most * candid apology for

* "This sophism, of arguing from the abuse of any thing against the use of it, is one of the grossest, and at the same time the most common, to which men are subject. The history of all ages, and none more than that of the period, which is our subject, offers us examples of the abuse of religion; and we have not been sparing to remark them: but whoever would thence draw an inference to the disadvantage of religion in general, would argue very rashly and erroneously. The proper office of religon is to reform men's lives, to purify their hearts, to inforce all moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws and civil magistrate. While it pursues these salutary purposes, its operations, though infinitely valuable, are secret and silent, and seldom come under the cognizance of history. That adulterate species of it alone, which inflames faction, animates sedition, and prompts rebellion, distinguishes itself on the open theatre of the world, and is the great source of revolutions and public convulsions. The historian therefore, has scarce occasion to mention any other kind of religion; and he may retain the highest regard for true piety, even while he exposes all the abuses of the false. He may even think, that he cannot better shew his attachment to the former than by detecting the latter, and laying open its absurdities and pernicious tendency, &c. &c." Vid. Note Hume's History of England, Chap. lxxi, Vol. VIII. in 8vo.

those

thoſe ſevere ſtrictures which I was obliged to throw out againſt every ſpecies of religious corruption, and the moſt ample encomium on true piety, have not ſecured me from the vehement attacks of my enemies. Undoubtedly I always attributed a great deal of good to the ſilent influence of religion, but ſtill I was of opinion that the puniſhments of human laws were the moſt powerful ſanctions of virtue to the populace, and that ſociety is more obliged to him who builds a priſon than to him who founds a chapel.

After all I may venture to affirm that my freedom of inquiry has been productive of more beneficial conſequences to mankind, than is generally ſuppoſed. Since the religious wars and animoſities of Europe have ſubſided, the minds of men have ſunk into a kind of lethargy or liſtleſs inconcern with reſpect to ſubjects of a theological * nature, I may therefore fairly plead that the doubts which I have ſtarted, have awakened mankind from this extreme of languor and indifference to an attentive concern for their ſacred intereſts. My political and hiſtorical labours are univerſally acknowledged to have great merit.

Dr. DODD.

Whoever compares your apology for your aſperſions on every religious ſect that comes in your way with the ſtrain of your eſſays, will not be inclined to think them very conſiſtent. In many paſſages you ſeem to ſtrike at the root of all religion, though you

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* We are induced to coincide with Mr. Hume in this ſtricture upon the age. It is not improbable that ſuch tranſient ſceptics may be permitted by the Deity in the moral world, as earthquakes and tempeſts are allowed in the natural to purify the air.

have carefully diſguiſed your real ſentiments and intentions under the maſk of an averſion to ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm. Your profeſſing to addreſs theſe libertine thoughts to men of reflection only is an inſufficient excuſe. The polite and elegant ſtrain of your writings has rendered them familiar to a numerous part of mankind, and particularly to the young, whoſe reaſon is immature and whoſe principles are unfixed. Beſides, you know that the inferior ranks naturally imitate the manners and adopt the ſentiments of the more learned and faſhionable part of ſociety, to whom your deiſtical labours are peculiarly addreſſed. In ſhort, Sir, I do not ſee how you can vindicate yourſelf upon this head. May I not venture to affirm that you have injured ſociety by your ſpeculations as much as I have by my practice?

MR. HUME.

If thoſe who embrace my principles imitate my morals, I can ſee no great detriment to ſociety from them.

DR. DODD.

Ah! Sir, you know that Epicurus was himſelf a man of pure and uncorrupted morals, yet his principles had ſuch a pernicious influence on the minds of his followers, that the great politician and moraliſt Monteſquieu, does not ſcruple to aſſign the prevalence * of the Epicurean ſyſtem as one of the cauſes of the decline of the Roman empire.

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* Reflections on the Cauſes of the Riſe and Fall of the Roman Empire, Cap. x.

MR.

MR. HUME.

I am desirous to put an end to this conversation. There may be a philosophical as well as a religious madness. The man who directing his labours towards the good of mankind, happily unites philosophy and religion, is one of the most illustrious and venerable objects in nature. Such a man becomes the dupe neither of fanaticism, superstition, or scepticism. He ought to be more revered by mankind than the Delphic oracle was by the antients; men of such sublime and enlarged minds are the only true guardians of the interests of the human race. Posterity will review your character with a high degree of abhorrence on account of your vices, and the pernicious tendency of my metaphysical system will considerably lessen their admiration of my virtues and genius *.

* Admirable is the inscription which that great rural philosopher Mr. Evelyn ordered to be inscribed upon his tomb; that "Living in an age of extraordinary events "and revolutions, he had learned from thence this truth, which he desired might be "thus communicated to posterity; *That all is vanity which is not honest; and that there "is no solid wisdom but in real piety?*"—Life of Mr. Evelyn.

FINIS.